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Dedicated to

**JOSEPH
CHAMBERLAIN**

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*An Epistle to Ahab
King of Israel.*

*Written in Answer to his
Letter to the Queen.*

Joseph, the Queen.

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An Epistle to Ahab King of Israel

*BEING an ANCIENT MANUSCRIPT
in which*

Jezebel, His Queen

A PRIESTESS of BAAL and THE PRINCESS of SIDONIA
TRIES to PURSUADE
THE KING to QUIT THE WORSHIP of JEHOVAH,
THE GOD of RIGHTEOUSNESS, and
to CONVERT HIM to WORSHIP her GOD BAAL,
the GOD of POWER,

*In order that
HE MAY EXTEND HIS KINGDOM by SUCH
DEEDS as the KILLING of*

Naboth, the Jezreelite

*And may DEFEND HIS COURSE by SUCH ARGUMENTS(?)
as HAVE BEEN USED by
CONQUERORS in ALL AGES and
SUCH as are STILL USED in MODERN TIMES
by THOSE RULERS who are WILLING
to KILL MEN, if NEED BE
to EXTEND EMPIRE.*



*Transcribed by
E. VAN DER SMEULEN
and C. S. HULST
teketece*



JEZEBEL'S EPISTLE TO AHAB

1 KINGS 22, 23; 2 KINGS 9.

O the King and his Scribes in the Ivory Palace
That gleams by the walls of Jezreel
His Queen devoted and leal
Bows low in obeisance. Oh King, live forever!
And never may finger of malice
Point scorn at unaccomplished endeavor:—

Arise now and take thou possession,
For Naboth is no more alive, but is dead.
Shrink not though the soil with his life-blood is red,
But rejoice at the happy conclusion.
Should the king of a mighty nation
With gold and gems and shekels galore,
With slingers and spearmen and bowmen, and store
Of modern munitions of war
Attesting his prestige and power
Be brought to shame and confusion
By a semi-civilized yeoman?
Play not the part of a woman,
Oh King of transcendent worth,
Dost thou not bear sway o'er a nation
Predestined to rule the earth?

Hadst thou yielded a weakly compliance
When he held to his own and made war
Would Assur still sue for alliance?
Would not Syria set at defiance
Thy power? or would she be fain to restore
What she wrested from thee of yore?

And what though the land was his homestead,
And within its narrow confines
Himself and his simple kindred
Beneath its fig trees and vines
Led harmless lives, and contented?
A greater number are served;
And thou and thy seneschal,
Thy allies and the mighty forces
That stand at thy beck and call
Are worthy its worth, for ye can
Develop his vineyard's resources
Far more than himself could, poor man!
Should he be permitted to keep it
And place it under his ban?
Ye will make it so fruitful that
Thy servants that sit at thy table
Grow merrier at heart, and fat,
And more cunning of head and of hand.
And wealth will reward their efforts
And riches abound in the land.
The thing that we did was but technical wrong,
We do good to a mighty band.
A New Ethics, and higher, is this;
Your old I can not understand.

It is clear that this case had grown urgent.
Should we, forsooth, let insurgent,
Like a stock, block a royal advance
By cries of "crime" and "aggression"?
Will not our mere occupation
The worth of the acres enhance
In the wide world's just estimation?
And is it not clearly a duty, besides,
To guard thine own interests, that booty
Accrue to thy banners and nation?
Within thy royal domain
Thy people might justly complain
Hadst thou neglected this by-way
That now has been opened, a highway,
(For a highway thou wilt ordain?)
Even Naboth's own kindred will thank thee
When they see the advantage to gain.

Worth its hire is the laborer's labor—
And thine has been to build cities
On spots that before were accursed—
Desert, barren, unfruitful—
Thou hast warred with idolatrous tribes,
Forced Concessions, Conventions and Treaties,
(Fit, thy coffers should be reimbursed),
Nay, more, hast constructed a way
To within the Gates of Damascus
Insuring thy Caravans gain,
And compelling our rivals to ask us
Permission to trundle a wain
Or to sail the Ship of the Desert.

And now thou canst sit at thine ease on thine own,
For that thou didst restore thy Sick Neighbor his Throne.
It is true that Ben Hadad did merit perdition,—
But did he not send to thy Court a petition
Most meek, and make offer to render submission?—
And meekness should merit Kings' mercy.
As meek as Ben Hadad should Nabothe have been.
We would, gracious, have granted a cottage
And given him scraps from our larder
Far better than his mess of pottage;
But he chose the course that was harder.
How silly! for that little room
That he, obstinate, held for his own,
To oppose the Lord's own Anointed,
Refusing a generous price
To sell, or to trade, or remove!
He met with a merited doom!

Ah, great are Israel's Kings!
How merciful and how tender,
Benevolent-minded! *What things*
They have done for the Law in those lands!
What services there they can render!

Now send thou from Dan to Beersheba,
The length and the breadth of the land,
To issue a Proclamation
Signed with the Seal of thy hand
That Nabothe, the traitor, has perished,
Blaspheming God and command
Of his King; and that, as concerns his Vineyard,

It is thine as a contraband
Award to the Crown and the Nation.
Let the trumpet sound and the cymbals ring,
Let the people assemble to honor their King,
Giving thanks to Jehovah and adoration
For granting his servants this consummation.

P. S. (*Strictly Private.*)

Meanwhile let me whisper it into thine ear—
Let not that fanatical prophet hear,
Elijah, who makes thy people to fear
And thus the peace of this Kingdom disturbs—
Long time have we wanted this Garden of Herbs.

I am glad it has come to a trial. We'd reason
To nip in the bud this species of treason.
For why denied he his King's command?
Because, forsooth, 'twas his God-given duty
To speak for his rights and defend his land,
His father's and father's father's before.
If "rights" in one region deny your rule
How long can you hold your power in hand
Otherwhere? Did the rascal think you a fool
That would yield to a weakness,
A prey by your meekness
To other claimants until, their tool,
You'd not a throne
Of your own?
You remember, King Ahab, that Omri,
Your father, was Captain — but Zimri

Was King. And his son ?
Will you own his "right" to your throne ?

And, lastly, once more I beseech thee,
Thy Queen with thy welfare at heart,
To give that Jehovah's worship o'er ;
Thou hast long abandoned it in part,
With such results as thou seest now,
Return to it no more.

Should a war-horse be tied, like a mule, with a tether ?
Should a King bare his head to all kinds of weather ?
With its prating of "duties" and "right"

It's impossible of wise application,

'Twill be an unendurable bore

To a monarch of your clear sight.

There's surely no need to say more.

The worship of Baal, the god of Power,
Is the worship best suited a King's condition;
For if, in pursuit of a worthy ambition,
Some innocent blood perchance should be spilled
Would Baal's vengeance lower ?

No, those that you killed

He'd view as an offering meet to his power.

And the only incense he'd of you require

(And it's what he breathes with supreme content)

Is nothing but *smoke*—you need not keep a fire

Aflame on his altar, in public—

The smoldering fumes of your "Moral Sense"

(Sense-less we think it,

The *morals* of *slaves* to Jehovah.) Its scent

Would be sweet to his nostrils. Don't falter.

Thus, you see, your heart's hopes may with ease be fulfilled,
If you in Baal's Temple with such incense sweet
To his Divinity, glorious, hoary,
Will make submission and offering;
He'll give you what will make you remembered in story:—
The Kingdoms of Earth and their Glory !
Oh, my King, let this incident wisdom teach,
And give thou Jehovah's worship o'er,
Except in name, for the public,
With cackle of rights and of duties.
And, remember, in strife that is certain to come
I am, forever,

Thy Queen, to be safely relied on
Always to serve thine interests well,
Priestess of Baal and Princess of Sidon,
King Ahab's devoted

Jezebel.

So she wrote to the King at the Palace,
Presenting his lips a full chalice,
Enticement that servants of Baal can brim,
Honey-sweet but poison — of Conquest
And Glory, of Empire and Gold,
To be gained by the worship of Power —
Not of holy Truth from Jehovah.
It was Truth that Elijah, the Tishbite,
When the Word of God's Wrath came upon him
Thundered forth with a "Thus saith the Lord,"
Foretelling when Ahab should welter
In gore, stark and cold,
While the dogs lapped his blood up like water;

Foretelling that day filled with slaughter
When no grave should receive Sidon's daughter,
But herself all painted and tired,
Age-withered, no longer the fair and admired,
Should be thrown by her slaves to the hounds,
Her bruised body agape with deep wounds,
Her blood on the white walls red sprinkled,
Her flesh gnawed by dogs from the bones,
Her skull tossed aside 'mid the stones
Of the humble cottage of Naboth,
Now fallen in ruins, forgotten
In Queen Jezebel's Garden of Herbs.

Banguo—*Thou hast it now, King, Cawdor, Glamis, all
As the Wierd Women promis'd; and I fear
Thou play'dst most foully for it.*—*Macbeth.*

